



## **Memorandum in Support of SB 540/541 (Access to Oral Chemotherapies)**

### **The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Supports SB 540/541 An Act to amend the insurance law, in relation to policy coverage of chemotherapy treatment**

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) strongly supports this legislation to require health insurance plans in Michigan to cover orally administered chemotherapy treatment similar to intravenously administered or injected chemotherapy treatments. It is part of LLS' mission to ensure that patients with blood cancers have access to the best possible treatments to fight their illness, regardless of a patient's age, ethnicity, income, insurance status, where they live or any other factors. As a result of ever evolving, cutting edge research and a commitment to finding cures and improving treatments, researchers are continually identifying new and more effective treatments for cancers and other serious diseases.

One of the recent medical advances for treating cancer that we have seen is the development of an oral chemotherapy treatment. With this treatment, a patient is able to undergo chemotherapy by taking a pill in the comfort of their own home. With oral chemotherapy, a patient does not have to go to the hospital or doctor's office for traditional intravenous or injectable forms of chemotherapy. Further, oral chemotherapy has an added benefit of possibly avoiding the traditional chemotherapy side effects such as hair loss and patients are able to sleep through the treatment as the pill is administered at bedtime and works while patients are sleeping.

This medical advance is very exciting and its benefits for patients are significant. However due to its current classification, many insurance companies are not providing coverage of oral chemotherapy, making it extremely cost prohibitive for most patients. Specifically, since this chemotherapy treatment comes in the form of a pill, insurance companies are classifying it as a prescription drug treatment. This means that the patient does not get the treatment covered as a traditional chemotherapy treatment and must pay for the drug in the same way that they pay for other prescription drugs.

Oral chemotherapy is very different than the average prescription drug in terms of co-pays and coverage. Most patients must currently pay out-of-pocket in the highest drug price category in order to access it. This means that for patients, the pill form of chemotherapy can cost tens of thousands of dollars. This is clearly unfair and greatly limits patient access to a viable and very desirable alternative to traditional chemotherapy treatment, which would help enhance compliance, improve a patient's quality of life when undergoing treatment and as a result, could result in better outcomes.

Since traditional chemotherapy treatment is usually covered under the major medical benefits, this change to Michigan law would correct this discrepancy and ensure that chemotherapy treatment, no matter how administered, is covered equally by insurance companies.

**LLS strongly supports SB 540/541 & urges swift action by Michigan lawmakers, which will level the playing field and make all chemotherapies affordable for those who need them.**

**For more information, please contact Zina Cary, National Director of State Affairs for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society at [zina.cary@lls.org](mailto:zina.cary@lls.org).**